

# The Power of Small

How Rural Libraries  
Can Help Their  
Communities Thrive

Allie Stevens, *Director*  
Calhoun County Library and Museum

# About Allie

2015 MLIS, Public Libraries focus - Louisiana State University

2018 ALA Emerging Leader, ArLA Sponsorship

2018 Library Journal Mover & Shaker - Community Builder

YALSA Selected List Volunteer

Accidental hometown library director

Founder of Tiny Library Think Tank

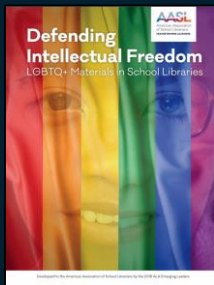
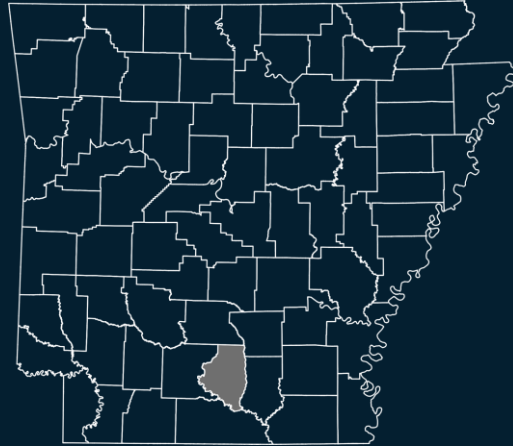


Photo by Doug Gritzmacher for Library Journal

# Calhoun County (AR) Library



**2-branch system serving 5,247 people (2017)**

- Main library + county museum in Hampton, AR
- Satellite branch in Thornton, AR

# Gotta Start Somewhere...

Recent changes and current projects:

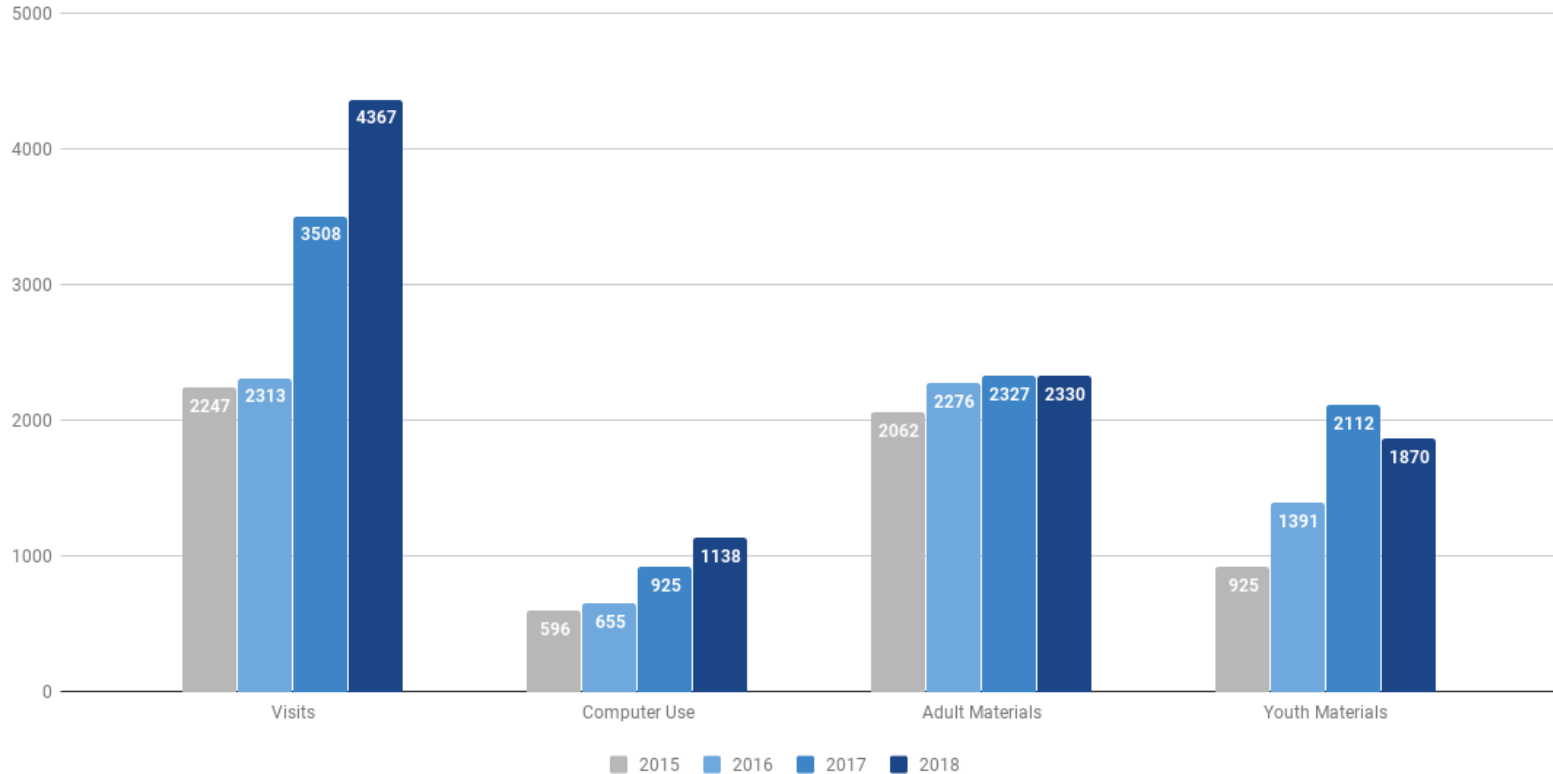
- Written policies
- Website
- Teen collection
- Summer Reading Program
- Retroactive automation



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# Measuring Results

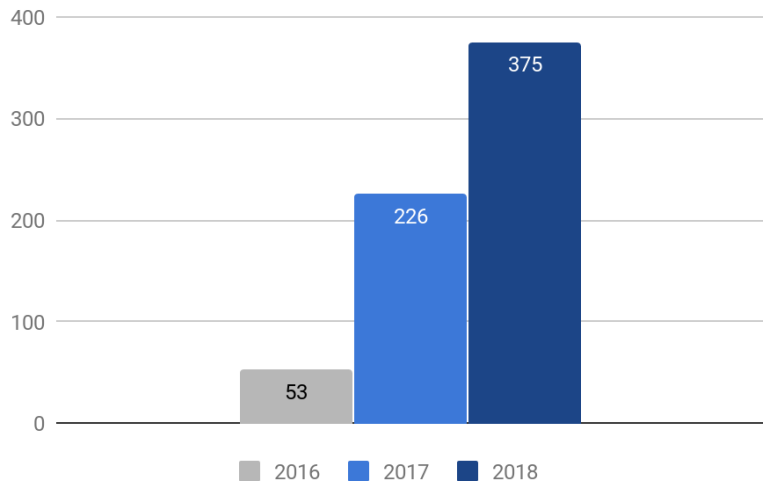
Calhoun County Library Usage and Circulation



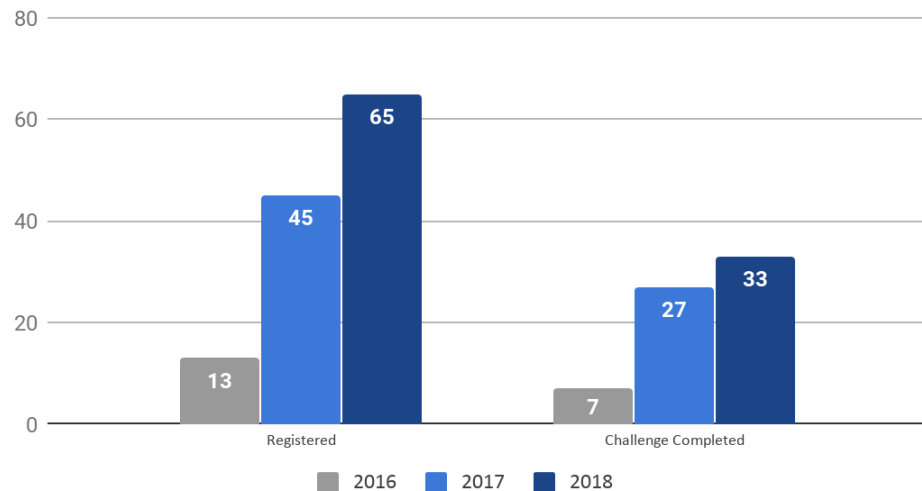
# Measuring Results

Summer Reading Program participation is also increasing.

Attendance at Summer Reading Program activities has increased seven-fold.



Five times as many children participated in 2018 Summer Reading Program as 2016.



The image features a dark navy blue background. In the top-left and bottom-left corners, there are overlapping geometric shapes in shades of green, cyan, magenta, and blue. In the top-right and bottom-right corners, there are overlapping geometric shapes in shades of magenta, cyan, green, and orange. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

Libraries  
support  
communities.

The background is a dark navy blue. It is decorated with several large, overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in various colors: bright green, cyan, magenta, orange, and light blue. These shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some appearing to be layered on top of others.

**Small and rural  
libraries account for  
80.5% of public  
libraries in the US,  
and serve over 46  
million people.**

Swan, D. W., Grimes, J., & Owens, T. (2013). *The State of Small and Rural Libraries in the United States* (Research brief No. 5). Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services.

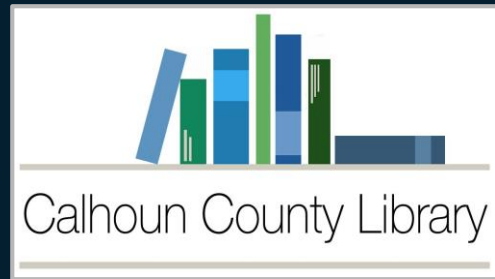


**“Rural” and “small” are  
relative terms.**

**Things work much  
differently in “tiny”  
libraries.**

## Tiny Library Think Tank on Facebook


- A spin-off of the massive Library Think Tank (formerly known as #ALATT)
  - Now has almost 950 members



# Tiny Library Challenges Opportunities:

- Increasing Community Engagement
- Allocating Resources Effectively
- Evaluating Services Provided
- Serving ALL Members of the Community
- Making Volunteer Help Actually Helpful
- Working with a Growth Mindset
- Avoiding Burnout

And doing it all with a miniscule staff, and probably not even a private desk.

The image features a dark navy blue background. In the top-left and bottom-left corners, there are overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of green, blue, orange, and pink. Similarly, in the top-right and bottom-right corners, there are overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of green, blue, orange, and pink. The central text is white and reads "Who are your stakeholders?".

Who are your  
stakeholders?

# Stakeholders are:

- Patrons
- Staff (managers and employees)
- County elected officials
- Potential partners
- Local business and industry leaders
- FUTURE library users

## Don't lead with the library.

- Schedule appointments and just listen.
- Ask stakeholder:

“What do YOU think are the major issues facing our community?”

- Take notes.
- Ask yourself: “What can the library do?”
  - Example: summer activities for kids

# Other Ways to Assess Community Needs:

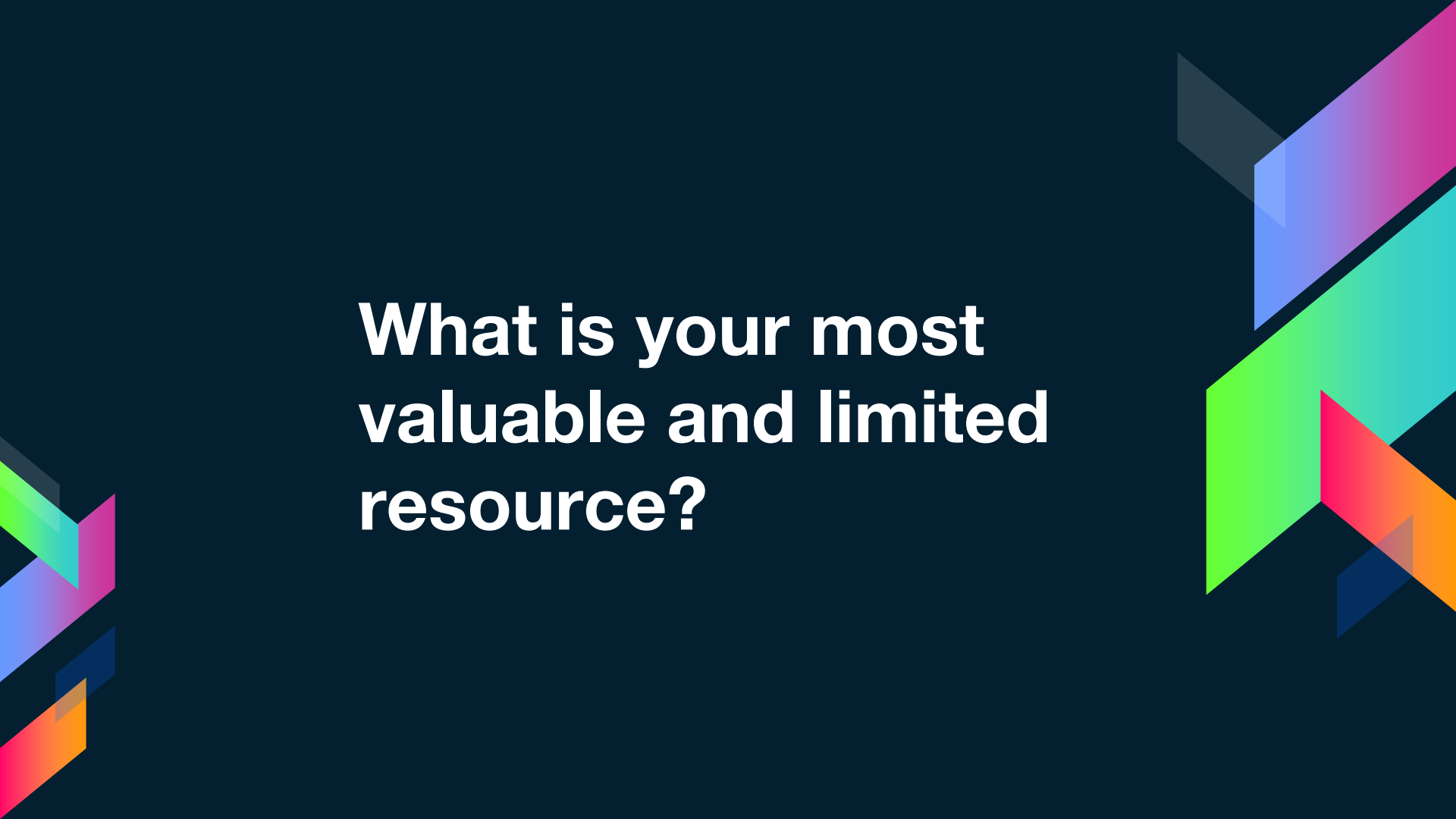
- Youth/teen advisory groups
- Focus groups (patrons and non-patrons)
- Community meetings
- Surveys

# Thinking Strategically About Resource Allocation





**What is your most  
valuable and limited  
resource?**



Time.



# Time Management for Really, Really Busy People

- Plan well, and plan often.
- Interval training, but for work.
- Don't make anything from scratch if you can help it.

# Indirect Financial Assistance

- Partnerships with local schools, businesses, organizations
- Local newspapers



**Provide programs that benefit the entire community and partner with other community groups for programming as often as possible.**



Photo by Allie Stevens,  
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# Using Surveys to Gather Community Feedback



# Survey Advantages and Disadvantages

## Good news:

- Data is great to show stakeholders
- Quotes for marketing materials and promotion
- Data to use to support decisions

## Bad news:

- Data is not very reliable
  - Only works if we remember
  - Questionable honesty
- Only surveys current users

The logo for Google Forms, featuring the word "Google" in purple and "FORMS" in black, with a purple document icon containing three horizontal lines.The logo for SurveyMonkey, featuring a green monkey head icon above the word "SurveyMonkey" in green, with a registered trademark symbol.

# Serving ALL Community Members



Your community is more diverse than it appears.

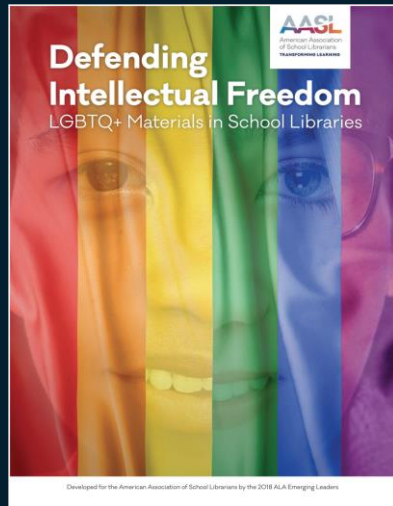
All citizens deserve public library collections that accurately reflect the world around them. Avoid becoming an echo chamber. Use titles by authors of all backgrounds and with characters of many identities in every book display.

If possible, purchase all requests.

# Resources for Increasing Diversity

## Ordering procedures

## Defending Intellectual Freedom: LGBTQ+ Materials in School Libraries



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# Volunteers: Help or Hassle?

# Both!

## Getting the most out of your volunteers:

- Volunteer paperwork
  - Written policy with signature
  - Privacy policy for patron protection
  - Information form
- Be very selective
- Project-specific or permanent schedule
  - No random drop-ins

# Teen Volunteers

- Snacks
- Free books
- Recommendation letters
- Volunteer hours
- Respect and trust

## Tips:

- Require set schedule/advance notice of absence
- Train and practice
- Give them some autonomy, such as choosing tasks from a list



Photo by Allie Stevens, used with permission

# My teen volunteers:

- Plan and execute youth programs
- Create floats for county fair and Christmas parades
- Cover and process books for cataloging
- Alphabetize, shelve, and shift books
- Provide minor technical assistance to patrons
- Prepare for and assist with summer reading activities



# Social Media for Tiny Libraries

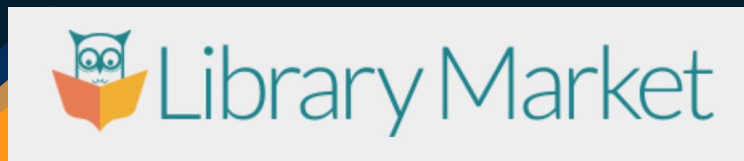


# Tips for Using Social Media Effectively:

- Be personal and informal
- Post regularly
- Choose the most-used platforms for your patrons



The Shareable Clique on Facebook



Library Market on Dropbox





# **Use a Growth Mindset to Prevent Stagnation**

“You must have worked very hard”  
vs.  
“You must be very smart”



## Growth Mindset:

- Believing intelligence/talents can be developed
- Increases self-esteem, resilience after failure
- Better overall outcomes

# What's My Mindset?

Fixed > Mixed > Growth



The screenshot shows the Mindset Works website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Mindset Works logo on the left and links for SCHOOLS, PARENTS, THE SCIENCE, PROGRAMS, ABOUT US, and BLOG in the center. On the right of the navigation bar are links for Login and Sign Up. Below the navigation bar is a large blue banner with the text "Assess Your Mindset to Begin Your Journey Today". Underneath the banner is a green bar with a newsletter sign-up form that says "Sign up for our newsletter to become part of the conversation:" followed by a text input field and a Submit button. Below the green bar is a white section with the heading "Take the Mindset Assessment to Learn More About Your Mindset". This section contains two paragraphs of text explaining the growth mindset continuum and the purpose of the assessment.

**mindsetworks**

SCHOOLS ▾ PARENTS ▾ THE SCIENCE ▾ PROGRAMS ▾ ABOUT US ▾ BLOG

Login Sign Up

## Assess Your Mindset to Begin Your Journey Today

Sign up for our newsletter to become part of the conversation:

Submit


### Take the Mindset Assessment to Learn More About Your Mindset

Our mindsets exist on a continuum from fixed to growth, and although we'd like to always have a growth mindset, the reality is that we can only be on a journey to a growth mindset. The goal is to recognize fixed mindset elements in ourselves and then reflect on feedback and strategies for how to improve.

The Mindset Assessment is a quick diagnostic tool drawn from research-validated measures for people age

# Favorite Free PD Resources



The background is a dark navy blue. It is decorated with several large, overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes, primarily triangles and parallelograms, in a variety of colors including bright green, cyan, magenta, orange, and blue. These shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some appearing to recede into the background and others coming forward.

You can do  
*ANYTHING,*  
but not  
*EVERYTHING.*

-- David Allen

# How to Avoid Burnout When You Can't Go to the Bahamas

Engage in professional development often.

Take breaks. Go OUTSIDE.

Straighten your workspace regularly.

Keep your old to-do lists and calendars.

Find a good emotional balance.

Develop a 2-minute meditation practice.

# Thank you!

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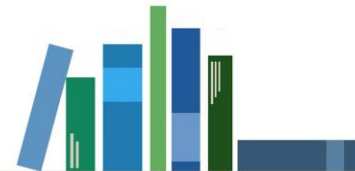
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